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SRI AUROBINDO'S

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"THE LIFE DIVINE"

A BRIEF STUDY

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A Brief Study

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SRI AUROBINDO'S
"THE LIFE DIVINE"
A BRIEF STUDY

FIRST VOLUME

"World-existence is the ecstatic dance of Shiva which multiplies the body of the God numberlessly to the view: it leaves that white existence precisely where and what it was, ever is and ever will be; its sole absolute object is the joy of the dancing." This is the gist of the knowledge enshrined in this great work.

But this, it may be objected, is mystic rapture or high poetic conception, not safe philosophy; for we now seem to be taking our idea of philosophy from what it has been in modern times in the West. Modern philosophy has been profoundly influenced by modern science; its view is dominated by the world-picture derived from the sciences and those sciences too, the sciences of inorganic Nature and not the sciences of Life or Mind, which are yet in their infancy. It has rarely stepped out of the charmed circle of imaginative rationality, a great exception being Spinoza. Pure Reason can greatly help us in elucidating and organising our experience and in unifying different departments of thought into one coherent whole, but the nature of Reality eludes its grasp. That is why the first direction given in India to the seeker of Reality has been, "Energise your consciousness." Among modern philosophers of the West, Bergson seems to recognise that the approach to Reality should be made through a certain intensification of consciousness.

"The Life Divine" proceeds on the basis of this direction; for the present organisation of our consciousness is not its final possibility. By an extension and intensification, by a finer and superior organisation of consciousness, we can through progressive comprehension attain Reality. Reason, too, by a complete purification of its purely conceptive activity, starting from observation of phenomena though not confined to them, can arrive at a perception of the truth of things; and the truth of that perception, by the very nature of the constitution of man and the universe, must be capable of verification by, and realisation in, his experience. There is also a form of knowledge by identity possessed by the mind and which gives it its self-awareness.

That can be extended to an awareness of the Self or Reality of the universe and man can thus enter into communion with it. But the highest or true form of knowledge by identity, which alone gives complete possession of Reality, can be reached only when the mind attains to a superior organisation of consciousness beyond itself. These, then, are the ways we should follow in our quest of Reality.

The great problem of the human mind is the opposition of Spirit and Matter. We may acquiesce in the opposition as final or we may explain away one or the other and then base the world on Matter and mechanical causation or Spirit and self-determinism. But usually we get along with a sort of weak-hearted compromise between the two, reserving one concept for one kind of phenomena and the other for the opposite kind. But reason, or rather the faith of reason in some possible unification, cannot tolerate this contradiction and discord; it seeks for reconciliation and harmony. The ancient Seers and intuitive thinkers of India found this harmony and reconciliation in the experience and concept of 'Sachchidananda'. With the help of this formula, together with that of Involution-Evolution, they arrived at an understanding of the essential oneness of the manifold universe and resolved all contradictions and oppositions of experience. They beheld 'Sachchidananda' or Existence-Consciousness-Bliss as the sole Reality, Matter as the final phase in the involution of Spirit or Sachchidananda and the material universe as the scene of its progressive manifestation in a gradually ascending series of inanimate and living forms.

The infinite energy of Becoming, which the universe is to our experience, is the outpouring of a pure, infinite existence. It is one, indivisible, omnipresent Reality and no mere hypostasised universal. It is not merely an immutable, unacting stability, timeless and spaceless, serving only as a support for the phenomenal movement. Nor is it a Nihil behind the movement, with existence as a momently recurring, and hence illusory, phenomenon. Infinite energy is inherent in It. It is free—free beyond intellectual conception—so free that it is not subject to, or compelled by, its inherent potentialities. And infinite energy is self-aware Force of this Absolute Existence. It would be wrong to think that awareness is confined only to the forms of it with which we are familiar; there are other forms of consciousness in Nature Again, it is a most astounding fact that we are not aware of even our own entire consciousness. From this ensues that consciousness may be present within while not manifesting itself on the surface. Also, an invariable connection need not necessarily exist between a special organisation of matter and consciousness and, certainly, vital organisation is only an instrument of consciousness and not its generator. It therefore becomes necessary to envisage a universal conscious Force organising itself variously in different principles. We are thus led to the conception of a self-aware primal Energy manifesting itself in the forms of the universal forces of Consciousness, Life and Matter, the gamut of consciousness reaching downward into Matter's inconscience and rising upward into Spirit's superconscience. Finally, this pure Being is Bliss, its limitless and illimitable Consciousness-Force is Delight, the procession of its infinite Energy is Joy. It is bondage and limitation that create sorrow. And the affirmations of the higher emotional and dynamic, aesthetic and mystic movements of man's consciousness point to a Bliss-Self as the true reality of the universe and lead to it. This then is the meaning of the Upanishadic conception of 'Sachchidananda' or Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, which through involution-evolution manifests itself as the universe and yet suffers not the least derogation from its absolute status.

But the ancient Seers did not work out the full intellectual implications of this position. They did not present to the mind a systematic and rational effort to assimilate our normal experience to this conception of the Reality; only, they threw out intuitive suggestions to impel the seeking mind towards the goal. But intuition is like the fitful flash of lightning, which may help us to reach our destination if we do not stumble and fall in the dark intervals of the journey. Its flashes have to be organised into a steady light which will throw a continuous illumination all along the path. And the pronouncements of the higher consciousness and the perceptions of pure Reason have to be justified to our intellect and ordinary experience. All this has been accomplished in the fulness of time by "The Life Divine."

Not that the work was not attempted before; the course of centuries is strewn with such attempts. They are to be found in the 'Darsanas' initiated by the Sages and in the philosophical schools created by the great commentators. Some accepted difference and multiplicity as ultimate in the teeth of the ancient teaching. Many found in Karma, a sort of mental-moral edition of mechanical causation, a too ready and facile solution of their many difficulties. Some drove a wedge between pure conscious Being and its infinite Energy. Some, trying to hold fast to the central element of non-duality in the teaching, declared universal Becoming a mirage falsely appearing on the desert-waste of the Real. Surely, it was a decisive retort to those that had set up that nightmare of Matter existing in its own right through eternity, placed mechanical causation on the throne of the universe and banished will and purpose into Nowhere. But, equally surely, the true poise of the ancient Wisdom was lost.

Sri Aurobindo has, through some mystic sympathy of his being, recaptured the thought of the ancient Seers in its purity and integrity. Even when he deals with the later systems of thought or ways of discipline, his vision penetrates to their core; their very errors and fanaticisms yield up to his vision the truth which is their soul of good and hence their source of strength. Into whatever apartment of our ancestral treasure-house of Wisdom he may enter, he emerges with his hands full of pure, bright-gleaming gold, freed from the accumulated dross of centuries. In his integral world-view, all truths of the partial and exclusive systems appear to find of their own accord their right place and relation. Thought, having reached its highest centre, seems to present a true and complete picture of its domain. It is as if a mountain-climber reached the summit and some miracle of the mountain air gave inconceivable increase to the range and vividness of his vision and then he commands a complete and perfect view of all that lies in the full circle of the horizon. Error often is error of perspective, of narrowness of outlook. A wider vision and a finer perspective ever help us to attain a greater harmony of truth.

Any philosophy that bases the world on Spiritual Reality has to face the problem of suffering and evil. And first and foremost any philosophy to be satisfying must give satisfaction on this problem, for it is this which is often the cause of philosophical enquiry. It is the same problem of the opposition of Matter and Spirit appearing in another context. If the problem of the opposition has been rightly solved, its new form in a different context should be automatically capable of solution on the same lines.

The problem looms terrifyingly large before the human mind because we often look at it through a magnifying medium—through great emotional disturbance, through the mists of certain kinds of religion and poetry that thrive on our sense of sin and sorrow, through deliberately gloomy pictures of our existence drawn by ascetic zeal with the purpose of turning us away from the good things of the world. But if we look at the problem dispassionately, its magnitude diminishes to a great extent. Suffering and evil are so intensely felt because they are the exception and not the rule, because they are really foreign to our being, and Nature pointedly calls our attention to them in order that we may deal with them and conquer them. Existence should be joyous in its own right, but our mental interpretation gives the value of pleasure or delight only to those states where normal joyous existence rises above a particular intensity; normal existence is interpreted by it as neutral. But our vital consciousness should all along be interpreting it as pleasurable, for on no other supposition can we understand the overwhelming strength of the vital instinct of self-preservation. Moreover, if we view the problem of suffering and evil against the cosmic background, we find that it occupies only a small intermediate stretch of the evolutionary process. Neither the galactic systems nor the high gods know of it. Thus viewed, the problem loses much of its oppressiveness and acuteness and shrinks into somewhat narrow limits. But still, it must be admitted, the problem as regards the fundamental nature of suffering and evil remains the same.

It is true that on any theory of extra-cosmic God the problem remains insoluble. But the Upanishadic Reality is One without a second and the universe is its creative self-expression. The one indivisible Spirit has built out of itself infinitely divisible Matter as the basis for the multiplicity of this world. In Matter's inconscience are involved universal forces of Life and Mind which emerge in an ascending series of forms. It is the effort to make of recalcitrant Matter a fit vehicle for higher and higher powers of Life and Mind that involves suffering. And the suffering is there only in the superficial vital and mental consciousness, but behind reigns unruffled the joy of existence, urging upward the cosmic effort. Evil, too, the cause of moral suffering, is there, only because man strives yet unsuccessfully to merge himself in the universal. The problem of evil does not exist for the animal. From the depths of man's being comes the urge which compels him to grow into one with the collectivity, into one with the universal. When man in his ascent recovers his identity with the universal he transcends evil and becomes an instrument for its elimination in the world. Suffering and evil are only a temporary incident of the Spirit's stooping to conquer this material world. Man shall cease to be subject to them when, with the help of a higher godhead of his spiritual nature, he will uplift body, life and mind into their divine perfection.

But still the mind from its human standpoint may urge: "Why at all this scheme of things where life thrives only on life and Nature is red in tooth and claw? Why this awful travail of man's being, even though it be to deliver the godhead lying imprisoned in his nature ?" Posed thus, the question becomes a part of the wider question, "For what cause and to what end should pure Being throw itself out into the universal movement ?" A completely satisfactory answer to this question, but an answer that, obviously, cannot be translated in terms of cause and end, can be reached only on a higher level than the mind. The mind may seize a fragment of its significance in its most liberated moments. "From Ananda," the Upanishad proclaims, "all existences are born, by Ananda they remain in being and increase, to Ananda they depart."

But now the question has to be answered, how out of the indivisible unity of pure Being do multiplicity and difference arise ? The ineffable Being proceeds out of its status into various poises of itself, but ever on the inalienable basis of the primal status, which is always present as the all-comprehending continent of all poises of Being. Conscisusness-Force moves forth into graded formulations of itself, into different forms of its energy and into various rhythms of its activity. Becoming active in its various modes, diffusing itself in multiple viewpoints in self-extension of Being, it initiates a progressing movement of self-absorption in its own modes of working, so that in the lower self-formulations the consciousness involved in the workings grows oblivious of itself in the whole, the consciousness involved in the multiple viewpoints or centres of Being appears separated from itself in the whole. Thus the appearance of multiplicity and separateness is to be traced in the last resort to the self-absorption of Consciousness-Force in its modes and centres. This formative and delimiting power of infinite Consciousness through which the One becomes the Many was, as Sri Aurobindo points out, called Maya by the ancient Seers. But later on, this fateful word came to mean power of illusion, and the universe came to be represented as an illusion which was the creation of the Ignorance. The non-duality of the Self of the Universe was sought to be preserved by making the universe itself an illusory projection on the one and sole reality of the Self.

For the crux of the whole matter lies in this, that the mind cannot form an adequate conception of Spirit's unity. The mind's idea of unity is either quantitative or qualitative, that is, mechanical or abstract; even the unity of living organisms is something hazy to it. That is why, in order to remain faithful to the perception and experience of unity underlying the multiplicity of the world, so many expedients have come to be tried, such, for instance, as an illusory universe, difference and non-difference or modified non-duality. But if we conceive of the sole infinite Reality as a positive or negative Absolute incapable of relations, we shall have to bring in some principle of mind such as Cosmic Ignorance or Cosmic Karma from somewhere and fasten upon it responsibility for the universe. This has been the way of Illusionism and Nihilism. It is difficult for the mind, formed into shape by its dealings with a material environment, to grasp the unity of Spiritual Being that reproduces itself in infinite centres without abolition or diminution of its unity. But here is a fact—the fact of consciousness secretly present while not outwardly manifest, which supplies the clue to an understanding of the true nature of Maya or the divine formative power; in it can be found the solution to the conundrum of finite out of the Infinite, of apparently divided beings out of the one indivisible Being; it will open the door to the understanding of how the Absolute can enter into relations and yet remain untrammelled by them. It is by hewing their way into the secret consciousness that "the Seers beheld," as the Upanishad says, "the power of the divine Self hidden by its own modes of working."

It is evident that Sri Aurobindo uses the word Maya in a sense entirely different from that of the philosophical systems. He has restored to it the significance it has in the original Vedanta. There it is a power both of the Knowledge and the Ignorance, that is, of Vidya and Avidya. But the great Acharya of Illusionism knows it only as power of the Ignorance. Sankara seems to intend by it some cosmic principle of Mind—not omniscient, not omnipotent, co-present but not in relation with Reality—which is compelled to realise its imaginings in Time and Space. But Idea or Thought, Imagination or Dream of such a Mind cannot account for the Divine Law at work in the universe. Only an omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent Mind can create and uphold the universe. And it is to that high status of Consciousness which forms in itself the seed of Creation and develops it according to unalterable Law, and which the Veda and the Upanishads refer to in their different symbolisms, that Sri Aurobindo gives the name of Supermind.

Mind is based on division while Supermind is based on unity. To our mental awareness thoughts are different from things, idea or will from the world, from the real. Our idea and will float up from somewhere within our being and often clash with each other. They are not self-effective because the means of effectuating them and the result to be effectuated are outside them. And even the notion of our being is hazy to the mind because only knowledge based on distinction is vivid to it. In Supermind being is not broken up in this manner. In it, being, consciousness and will are three indivisible and harmonious aspects of a single movement or act of existence. Consciousness is the light of self-luminous Being and will its creative, self-fulfilling Force. Its Idea is knowledge of a Truth of Being which is self-effective and inevitably and automatically works itself out in the world: It is Real-Idea. Supermind sees the world in itself and as itself. The All and the One are in it the same existence.

Supermind is that intermediate poise of Consciousness-Force which pure and indivisible Being assumes in its descent into the material world. It is described in Rig-Veda as the Vast without the separating barrier, as the Truth of the Stability and the Truth of the Movement where the omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent Divinities that are different Names and Forms of the One and who preside over the work of the evolutionary creation of this lower hemisphere of existence, take their birth. In full possession of the truth of unity, it initiates the deployment of multiplicity. "All in each and each in all" is the formula of this poise of consciousness. Here there is multiplicity but not separateness. Through intervening gradations Supermind merges itself into the Cosmic Mind, where the Knowledge of unity recedes somewhere into the background and the play of multiplicity on the principle of separateness and division occupies its entire active attention.

It follows that the universe is no illusion but a real creation of the Supermind. On the level of the Mind, consciousness falls into the Ignorance, that is, the Knowledge of Oneness retires, leaving free field for the principle of separateness. But mental, vital and material energies, perceived though they are in evolved, individualised units, are nonetheless universal forces. These three principles of our human existence are specialisations of one and the same Consciousness-Force in its descending movement of involution, material substance-energy appearing as the final aspect of Supramental Being, Life as the final aspect of the dynamic energy of the Supermind and Mind as the final aspect of an apprehending and confronting, as contrasted with a comprehending and pervasive, movement of consciousness in the Supermind. But all being is the play of One, all is in each and each is in all. So out of inconscient Matter emerge by a process of evolution the involved energies of Life and Mind.

In the forefront of this evolution is man. Is the urge of evolution to come to a stop with the development of mental consciousness in him, or will it sweep forward to the level of the Supermind? If it is to sweep forward, is man to be left behind and another creature to take his place and carry forward the evolutionary urge? This is for man the question of questions. The message of Sri Aurobindo is that man is that creature of destiny in whom the rising wave of consciousness shall reach the Supramental level. Man can realise the Supermind, "although to live in it and see and act from it is," as Sri Aurobindo says, "a victory that has not yet been made humanly possible." And it is Sri Aurobindo's mission to realise and create this possibility.

Such, in hurried outline, is the theme of the great work under consideration. It is evident that this is no mere abstract speculation but a grand synthesis of our knowledge and experience in the light of psychological discoveries made at high altitudes of our being. The Veda and the Upanishad have been waiting for centuries for the next forward and inevitable step. That step has now been taken. The result of that step is "The Life Divine."

SRI AUROBINDO'S
"THE LIFE DIVINE"
A BRIEF STUDY

SECOND VOLUME

Science would derive the universe from an initial limited stock of energy through fortuitous evolution and assure it a quiet end by means of the law of increasing entropy. Blind chance is the builder of the worlds; for the random behaviour of quanta or the basic infinitesimal units of energy takes on in the mass the character, by statistical effect, of an order or system governed by uniform laws. Anyhow, the order of the world is the order of an invariable, though not a necessary, sequence. Modern science finds the notion of chance understandable and the notion of necessity mystical. But it would appear that the chance it contemplates is not one arising out of a pure and unmitigated chaos, but one leaping into play from a system of attractions and repulsions with which it endows its basic units. And even if such a chance may perhaps be admitted as being able to issue in some sort of necessity called statistical, both of them, the chance and the necessity, can only be the expression of some inherent imperative truth of world-energy. What that may be, Science does not tell.

The older Science that believed in a world governed by necessity, boldly declared that given perfect knowledge of any one moment in the world-sequence it could know all other moments, backwards and forwards, of the entire sequence. With the exception of the sub-atomic realm which is now given over to indeterminacy, with some reservations of a purely theoretical import as regards future happening, that declaration even to-day stands. Only, modern science would like to reduce necessity to chance; that would be more in accord with its hypothesis of a self-sufficient energy. And that all world-phenomena can be reduced to some physical energy is an article of faith even for modern science; only, some scientists would perfer to give the name 'neutral stuff' to the basic energy.

But there are fatal difficulties in the way of this belief. First of all it is well to remember that science cannot give a complete account of the world for the simple reason that it limits its investigation to particular aspects of it. Science successfully studies the workings and results of some of nature's energies. It discovers the regular sequence within the workings and the constituent factors of the results. This knowledge often gives us control over those workings and results, but does not provide us with their fundamental explanation. Going a little further into detail, we see that physical Science studies the structure of phenomena and hopes thereby to understand their whole variety and range. This would appear to be an impossible hope, for even of the phenomena it studies,it knows only the structure but not the nature. We see new and unpredictable qualities coming into being with new complexities of structure. If structure is wholly responsible for these qualities, that is, if it is their entire cause, we should be able to predict them; but it is not the case. That is why it appears unlikely that Chemistry could ever be reduced to Physics. But how about the emergence of creative Life and purposive Consciousness? There is no question of equivalence between life and the physico-chemical conditions that are the occasion of its manifestation, between the energy that it takes into itself and that into which it is transmuted by it. The upward tendency of Life, which is so obvious in the ever more complex forms that it throws up, cannot be accounted for by science and can belong only to a creative energy striving for higher and higher expression. Life is an energy that is building up in a universe that is running down. Deathless in the germplasm it is at least *de jure* immortal—an infinite. And as for consciousness, its nature becomes incomprehensible if we try to look at it as a product of living matter, and its activity, too, becomes quite un-understandable if we try to see it as wholly determined by forces acting upon it from outside. It is a light on the path-ways of life's creation, it is a thing of freedom striving to widen out the close meshes of necessity in which it is held captive. It is not a functionless phosphorescence occurring in the track of molecular disturbance in brain matter, nor, worse, is it something which has the nuisance function of engendering vain illusions of free-will and purposiveness. It is a herald of the Spirit. Creativeness, purposive will and freedom cannot be born, it is evident, out of necessity or even mere indeterminacy. It is strange that Science which has thrown shaft after shaft of penetrating light into the material term of Nature and revealed it as a fit dwelling for the gods, should end in darkening our understanding of Life and Spirit.

We can neither shut our eyes to the most obvious facts of life and consciousness, nor black out our deepest and most persistent intuitions as regards the universe, even for the sake of scientific theory. Starting on a metaphysical enquiry into the truth and origin of things, we find ourselves forced to the conception of an Absolute—an Indeterminate that is the source of all fundamental determinates, an Infinite supporting all relative infinites. Mind cannot achieve this concept with any degree of satisfaction; it is fascinated by it and yet staggered at the same time by the many contradictions that arise from it. Some vital truth of the Absolute is caught by man's intenser consciousness and intuition, but is invariably crushed under the destructive weight of a philosophical system which the intellect builds upon it. Kindly agnostics warn us that this seeking after the Absolute is an absolute futility, but consciousness tells us that it is there in us for utter and complete knowledge; the Absolute can be known in a knowledge beyond the mind's knowing. The contradictory deliverances of even intuitive knowledge need not dishearten us; for every contradiction, however obstinate and irresolvable, is an indication to consciousness, not for turning back, but for a higher ascent wherefrom to achieve a more total perspective. At some level of consciousness it must be possible to resolve all contradictions and arrive at a unified all-knowledge. Sri Aurobindo tells us that it is in the global and integral vision of the Supermind—"of which intuition is only a sharp edge, or intense projected ray"—that we can escape from the opposition of all partial views and come into possession of the Supreme Truth.

But it is not to be supposed that Supermind is some tranced state that is numb to the difficulties of our reason and the paradoxes of our experience, or that it is some wonder-realm where arbitrary miracle achieves harmony out of conflict. It is quite the contrary, for it is Supreme Reason. Its logic is the logic of the Infinite, of the relations of spiritual existence. It is this reason and this logic that can resolve the oppositions between oneness and diversity, flux and identity, being and becoming, the infinite and the finite, the universal and the individual that confront us everywhere and pursue us in different forms into every order of phenomena and into every level of experience. In the final illumination of the Supermind they find their perfect reconciliation and harmony.

But meanwhile it is not necessary that reason should abdicate, or wait helpless and ineffective. For example, it is able to understand and organise the infra-rational instinct in man; something similar it can do with intuition until it becomes perfectly sure of itself. For this purpose it has to become subtle and sensitive to a deeper range of reality. It has to revise its concepts and remould its categories, not arbitrarily or speculatively, but in living response to a compulsive deeper experience. If reason could not over-leap its mechanistic limitations, it would not be able to explore realms of reality other than material, and silence would be the only way of dealing with the ineffable Absolute. But it is because reason could do this in some measure that it becomes possible to have a science of reality which is something more than a synthesis of the sciences of nature.

To the understanding of such a large and plastic reason Sri Aurobindo presents, in this second volume of "The Life Divine", a uniquely integral view of Reality which harmonises its conflicting aspects, a synthesis of opposed lines of spiritual experience which shows them meeting on the level of the Supermind, beyond mind and Overmind, and a comprehensive conception of the Absolute which resolves the difficulties and contradictions that the intellect finds in its effort to seize it. There have been at all times philosophies that tried to envisage the ultimate Reality as mechanical — the Reality being regarded as absolutely self-sufficient, though not necessarily infinite; there have been other systems that tried to identify the Absolute — regarded at least as the supreme though not as the only Reality—with some principle of life or consciousness as we know them, such as desire or will, idea or phantasy, dream or false imposition. But the Veda and the Upanishad – the founts of Spiritual knowledge for the ages – have regarded the Absolute as an Absolute of Existence, Consciousness and Delight and the Universe as its self-manifestation. The full meaning and implications of this conception have been already explained in first volume of "The Life Divine". An original and unique exigesis of this Vedic doctrine of the world as a progressive self-expression of the One and the Omnipresent Divine Reality, an exigesis which helps as none other has done to bring down its truth from the level of vision or self-evidence to the intellect and enable it to see how it is that there arises this staggering opposition between the nature of the world and that of the Divine Reality, and also a further original development of this doctrine as regards the nature of man's fulfilment—all this in true accord with the body of the spiritual experience that we find recorded in the Upanishads and the Vedic hymns—is what one is privileged to read in these volumes. Here we are far from the din of dialectical battles, we are lifted quite above mere logical controversy though dialectical skill and logical acumen of the rarest order make themselves constantly felt. But behind the movement of ideas and arguments of the Master we sense a stream of *seeing* thought flowing into the mind and filling it with a liquid brilliance which can image within it the form and feature of spiritual truth. We have a traditional way of expressing our gratitude to the cleansing and life-giving streams of our land; it is to take as much water from them as our joined palms can hold and give it back to them as the only adequate offering. What is intended by the present study is something similar in spirit.

If our concept of the Absolute is to have any significance at all, we must conceive it not only as the sanction and support but also as the essence and source of all determinations. Surely the absolute is indeterminable; but the true sense of this and other kindred negative statements about the Absolute is not negation but affirmation. The Absolute is free from limitation by its own determinations and free to release from within itself infinite self-determinations. Indeterminability is in this sense a necessary condition of free infinite self-determinations The one implies the other and there is no opposition between them. They are two aspects, one essential, the other dynamic and creative, of the Absolute. If indeterminability and free infinite self-determination were not both of them complementary elements in our conception of the Absolute, the Absolute would be reduced to the position of an indeterminate void or of a fixed determinate, or it would become a mere sum-total of fixed possibilities of determination inherent within it. The opposition between an indeterminable Absolute and a universe of determinations is merely conceptual; the universe need not therefore be an illusory projection of the Absolute or a mysterious superimposition upon it.

Again the statement of the Absolute's illimitable freedom, freedom from form and name, quality and feature and so on, is not meant to limit by negation the Absolute to an essential condition without form and feature. It is a positive statement of the Infinite's capacity of infinite self-expression. It denies that any sum of its self-expressions could ever sum up the Infinite. Similarly, there is no real opposition between essential, infinite oneness and infinite multiplicity of manifestation. It may be said on the other hand that the fullest power and truth of the unity of the One is expressed in its utmost differentiation of itself. The same conciliation occurs as regards the opposition between being and becoming, that is, between unchangeable Identity and incessant flux; for what characterises Being is not the self-identity of eternal blankness or of one fixed formation, but the unchangeableness that persists unimpaired through endless formation of Being. We see, therefore, that the fundamental negative statements about the Absolute are not really opposed to their corresponding positives; they deny only the limitations that may be there implied in the latter. And if our thought tries to reach at the Absolute with the help of an all-excluding negation, we should not forget that it is compelled at the same time to conceive of it as the Supreme Positive of all positives. However, the great elucidation of these conceptual perplexities can come only when the nodus of the Absolute and the Relative is seized in experience.

To a knowledge by identity to which man's inner being has access, the Absolute is revealed as an Infinite of self-existence, self-awareness and self-delight of Being. These three primal aspects of the Reality are an inseparable trinity. However, on the level of Mind and Overmind, each of them may be entered into by the exclusion and even obliteration of the rest, while lower down they are felt as divorced from each other. Each of these primal aspects of infinite Existence, Consciousness and Delight has its fundamental spiritual determinates, fundamental because they are the necessary postulates for all its self-manifestation. The fundamental determinates of the Divine Delight of Being are Love, Joy and Beauty; of infinite consciousness-force of Being, Knowledge and Will—expressing themselves as the Power of conceptive creation or Maya, as the self-effectuating executive Force or Nature or Prakriti and again as the Conscious Power of the Divine Being or Shakti which works through both the modes of Conceptive Creation and dynamic execution. And the aspect of Infinite Existence reveals itself as Self or Atman, as Conscious Being or Spirit or Purusha and as God or the Divine Being or Ishwara. Now it should not be thought that these determinates are exclusive of each other. The distinctions made here do not imply a division in the Spiritual Reality; for in it there could de no division as in Matter, but only self-variations, self-limitation and self-absorption; and even in Matter, it is well to remember, there is division but no isolation. A status of Being for example is a self-variation of Infinite Being in which that status prevails while other statuses are withheld from actively manifesting themselves within it. It is the same with a mode of Consciousness-Force.

The One Existent appears as the Cosmic Self with regard to the universe, but as the Supreme Self He is transcendent of the universe and at the same time individual-universal in every existence. Transcendence and impersonality are the characteristic features in the individual's experience of identity with the Self. But Conscious Being or Spirit or Purusha is seen as intimately connected with

Nature, for He is the Self as originator and enjoyer of the forms and works of Consciousness-Force or Nature and assumes various graded poises of His Being appropriate to each of her varying gradations. He is identical with the Self, in that He is individual and cosmic and transcendent; but He is characteristically the Impersonal-Personal Spirit in all existences—impersonal because it is undifferentiated by personal formation and personal because it is that which presides over every individualisation of existence. But the true regard of Spirit to Nature is that of mastery over its own executive force, and this aspect of mastery comes out in its fullest power in the Divine Being or God or Ishwara. For He is the Infinite Being in its transcendental and cosmic consciousness and force, Creator and Ruler of the universe, Friend and Refuge of all creatures, the All-Person who is the source of personality. And of Him cosmic Joy and Beauty and Love are the most intimate revelation. Thus seen, this is the most comprehensive aspect of the Reality. For He is the Absolute or the Supreme Brahman; at the same time He is the Supreme Self and He is also the Supreme Purusha. The Divine Being is that supreme aspect of the Reality which is master and enjoyer of its own self-existence, ruling from above and guiding from within its own self-manifestation. The Divine Being thus regarded is not the personal God or Gods of popular religions who are limited representations of certain divine qualities and powers. Neither is He to be identified with Saguna Brahman—the Reality manifesting itself in infinite quality and action, for the Nirguna or the Reality not manifesting in quality and immobile is also an aspect of His Existence.

But as in the effort of Pure Reason to reach the Absolute, so also in the striving by direct experience to get to the Infinite Being man is faced by the perplexity of conflicting deliverances. Here too the cause is similar. It lies in pitting one partial experience against another and in trying to found the whole scheme of things on that partial basis. But it may be asked how at all authentic spiritual experience could be partial. The answer to this is to be sought in the nature of Spirit's self-manifestation, which is a process of graded involution and evolution. If we look into this process a little closely, we shall be able to discover the source of the movement of Ignorance, of which Mind is merely a consequence and critical stage, and then it would be easy to see how it is that, like mental reason, spiritual experience too can be partial.

We must accept free self-variation as a power of Spirit, that being a necessary postulate for its self-manifestation in the universe.

And self-variation would involve the consequence that the One Being could be aware of itself simultaneously in different real Statuses of consciousness. There would be no impairment, however, of the knowledge of infinite oneness. Another power again, a power of free self-limitation, we should be able to accord to the Infinite, for it is a necessary precondition of its self-determinations. As a consequence of this power, we can imagine Infinite Consciousness moving into a special determination of itself to preside over and base a world or a world principle such as Mind, Life or Matter; and taking one more step, we can imagine it moving into a still further specialisation of the World Being in that special determination and assuming the status of the individual self or spirit. And so far too, Consciousness would be limiting its action with full knowledge of all itself. As a result of another power inherent in Spirit and indispensable for creation—the power of self-absorption, we have the luminous trance of the Infinite where infinite consciousness is swallowed up in pure being that is merely self-aware—the state of Super-conscience, and its opposite pole of dark trance which appears as an infinite non-being—the state of Inconscience. And by a partial action of the same movement as of this twofold infinite self-absorption, we can imagine Infinite Being becoming aware separately of one aspect or status of itself, and consciousness limiting itself to one field of being and to a particular movement of itself. Integral consciousness, or the Knowledge would now be abolished, though always recoverable. Here would be the source of the downward movement of the Ignorance. And these powers of Spirit—of self-variation, self-limitation and self-absorption—provide the key to the mystery of the process of Spirit's self-manifestation, that is, of Creation.

Now it would be easy to see how consciousness may, in its descent or ascent,—descent from the integral to the limited and ascent from the limited to the integral—identify itself with one status or movement of itself to the exclusion of the rest. A fundamental double status like that of Nirguna and Saguna, each based upon a truth of the absolute, becomes possible in the infinite consciousness. And man's limited consciousness rising to or reflecting one or the other may be inclined to claim that a Pure Being actionless and immobile, or an Infinite Person upholding and directing the works of the world, is the Supreme Reality. It thus happens that an opposition is set up between these statuses. We can form some figure of such differing and conflicting statuses in Infinite being from the normal experience of our limited consciousness, for instance, from the duality arising in us between our consciousness that is involved in the automatism of some habit and the rest of it that is relatively free. That their duality can be much more than a figure of speech is brought home to us when the conflict between them becomes formidable ; yet the truth is that they are not two different things but a dual status belonging to a single consciousness, and that in both of them there is the same consciousness, in one tied up and in the other relatively free. Thus comes about the danger of the truth of one authentic experience being set in opposition to other truth of a different but equally authentic experience. Only a profound intuitive sense that all aspects of the World-Reality, however conflicting and contradictory in appearance must find their complete reconciliation in the Supreme Truth can guard us from this danger.

There is, for instance, the opposition that is made between personality and impersonality, and it is often facilely assumed that the impersonal view of the Reality is the higher and final truth. We are impressed by the universal and impersonal character of the inconscient energy of Nature creating a world of countless forms, all modifications of itself. And we try to imagine the relation between the undifferentiated Spirit and the personal individuals as something similar to that between the inconscient energy of Nature and its modifications. We argue that a modification is name and form merely, and that the basic energy alone is the truth. But obviously this is a partial view, for the truth also of its modifications enters into the truth of basic energy. Diamond and coal are both of them carbon ; but we know more fully of the nature of carbon when we have known that it can appear in the form of coal or diamond. Form is not figment. It is significant, evidently, of some essential truth and is rooted in it. It is wrong therefore, even in the case of inconscient existence, to think that universality is the truth and individuality is a transient and baseless phenomenon. But we take over this wrong outlook into conscient existence, think that personality is something belonging only to its manifestations and conclude that conscient existence at its source must be impersonal. But the fact is that the truth of personality is rooted in conscient existence itself. The chief reason, however, for holding the impersonal view of the Reality as the ultimate truth would seem to be the overwhelming nature of the experience of the impersonal Self. However convincing and far-reaching this experience and however necessary, too, for the spirit's transcendence of Nature, it must be held to be a partial experience. The experience of the Reality as personal has been held to be equally convincing and far-reaching. There is no opposition, however, between these two aspects of the Reality, the personal and the impersonal, for what we mean by Person is conscious Being and what appears impersonal may be said to be a power of the Person or Conscious Being. An Infinite Self-existence is the highest Reality; but of this the basis and ground, as the Gita puts it (XIV, 27), that is the truth and significance may be said to be the Supreme Being, transcendent and eternal—an Infinite Person, so to say, because it is His being which is the source, essence and truth of all personality.

Such is the integral view of the Reality, a Reality manifold of aspect, status and movement and whose oneness is absolute and nowise or nowhere suffers the least impairment, that Sri Aurobindo presents to us. This view has been implicit in the Upanishads and the Gita, but it has been missed ever afterwards or, assuredly, it has never been brought out with such clarity and convincingness. It should be now easy, we presume, to realise also the great help Sri Aurobindo brings to the understanding of the Upanishadic view of creation. The Upanishad speaks of creation by the Reality through 'seeing'—the expression it often uses is, 'It (the Reality) saw and it became' or 'It saw and it loosed forth from itself'—and through meditation and Tapas or intense self-concentration and self-absorption. There is no tinge here of illusion or false imposition or ignorance. Neither is it anything like the potter making his pots. It is a creation by Infinite Consciousness which realises whatever it sees within itself. And naturally arising out of this view of the Reality and of creation as self-manifestation is Sri Aurobindo's view of the aim of man's life and the nature of his fulfilment. This integral view of the Reality in which Being and Becoming are both real aspects of the ineffable Absolute, does not permit of abosrption or dissolution being held as the aim of the human soul. Man's aim should be an integral aim and not some escape-solution such as the above. His fulfilment should be an integral fulfilment and not a saving of the soul by a rejection of the nature. His destiny is to recover his infinite Spiritual Being and express it to the highest and largest extent possible in the Becoming; for Becoming is neither a fall nor an illusion but a movement of the Divine Reality to a Divine Issue. The soul has not come into the Becoming from its source in the Absolute just for the purpose of escaping back into the Absolute. Its mission is to manifest, here in the conditions of the Becoming, the highest powers and intensities of Being, of Consciousness, of Delight. This is the aim of human life and its highest fulfilment. This is what Sri Aurobindo calls the Divine Life. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is above all else the philosophy of a divine life, and this aspect of it may be said to be his greatest and in a way his special contribution. But before going further into this matter it is necessary to form a clear idea of the truth of man's individuality. That would decide if the integral aim of a divine life on earth which Sri Aurobindo has presented to humanity is at all a possible aim; for if man's individuality were such that only in its abolition lay its fulfilment, there could be no basis for a really divine life in the fullest sense of the word and it is only by courtesy that a life of striving devoted to the annihilation of individuality could be called the divine life.

The essential fact about individuality is that it is a centre in consciousness (this is spatial language but it is inevitable) for experience, for all-vision and self-vision. It is more than a particular individualisation of the world principles of matter, life and mind. It is the Divine Nature, by which is upheld the world-nature, that has become the individual; it is an eternal portion of the Divine Being (Gita VII, 5; XV, 7), not subject to the phenomenal incidents of modification and beyond mortality and Time (Gita Chapter 2).

The true individual or person or Self is a power of being of infinite self-existence, a self-limitation in it with full knowledge of all itself and untouched by the separative ignorance. It is of one essence with the transcendent Reality. Going beyond the separative ego, a formation of world-nature, we reach the true Individual that is our Self (Mundaka 1, 3, 1 . . 3)and thus come into possession of the joy of union and identity with the transcendent and cosmic Divine and with the other selves; that is, we come into possession of the joy of a perfect self-manifestation of the Divine, unclouded by Ignorance which is a movement of world-nature. It is on the supramental level of Being or in Vijnana that we reach our true spiritual Self and it is from here that can be brought down the Light and the Power that can entirely transform, so as to accord with the Divine Will and Idea, the lower nature and its workings in the mind, in the life and even in the body. Then would be the divine life—a perfect self-expression of the Divine, even in the lower nature as in the higher Divine Nature. This, according to Sri Aurobindo, is the divine consummation of the evolutionary urge in the material universe, of the great human enterprise on this planet. This is no escape from Nature; it is mastery over it and through that mastery, its transformation. It is a divine fulfilment, possible even here—not beyond, possible even now—not in timeless eternity.

But the logical mind has its difficulties again in comprehending this integral aim of a divine consummation of the soul or spirit expressing itself, through a divine life and divine works, in Nature. If the liberated individual becomes one with the Supreme Reality, who is it that is left to enjoy the divine union or live the divine life? But if a divine life based on a divine union is insisted upon as man's fulfilment, it may be perhaps accepted as a stage in it, but not as his final fulfilment; for in that, there could not be even a shadow of difference between the Transcendent and the individual and for a continuing relation of union with the Divine, some sort of difference would seem to be necessary. In the highest liberation individuality must be phenomenal or even illusory, for there could not be a multiplicity of real individuals in the One Reality.

To answer these objections with countering logic would be futile, for here we have to understand the basic relations of Infinite Self-existence. The appeal should lie to experience. The concepts of identity, difference, identity in difference, and so on, fail to express adequately the relation of the Individual to the Eternal. The physical notions of part and whole, of continent and contained do not apply at all to the indivisible Spiritual Reality. Again, such poetical analogies as that of the streams losing themselves in the sea and becoming one with it, or of the sun and his reflection becoming one with the removal of the reflecting medium, and so on, though they succeed in bringing home to the mind and the heart some element of the truth, fail to touch the others and pressed too far end in distorting it. The Upanishads describe the condition of the liberated individual as one of mergence in the universal and of utter ineffable identity with the Absolute; also as one wherein he sees all beings within himself and himself within all beings, for all beings become his very self; and as one wherein he sees all beings and himself in God and God in himself and all beings. Obviously here is no annihilation of the individual Self and the relation between the Self and other selves and between the Self and God is not one of mere psychological contact. It is a relation of mutual inclusion and clearly separativeness is not the basis on which spiritual individuality stands. And in that case, all the logical difficulties, which have been indicated above, of a mind that reasons from its own experience of separative existence must get convicted as fallacies. The only way to understand all deeper spiritual experience is to see that the transcendent and the universal and the individual are the three terms of existence, each of them including, either overtly or behind the veil, the two others. The liberated individual consciously possesses his unity with the transcendent and the universal, which is veiled by Ignorance in the ordinary individual. It is such a liberated individual who, with the mastery born of his liberation, transforms the mental, vital and physical nature which is the basis of his existence here and lives a divine life. But one objection might still be made; it might be said that so long as we can speak of these three terms of existence, the transcendent, the universal and the individual, we are in the realm of manifested Reality and that in the ineffable Absolute they cease to exist. But the position taken by Sri Aurobindo is that their truth, however ineffably other than what the highest spiritual experience knows, must be pre-existent even in the Absolute.

If we accept that "the soul is an eternal portion of the Supreme and not a fraction of Nature", that "it is not a perishable cell or a dissoluble portion of the Cosmic Spirit, but has its original immortal reality in the Transcendence ," then the basis is assured for the Divine Life and the Divine Work pointed out to us by Sri Aurobindo as man's high goal. A transmutation of the mind-life-body nature through the descent of the Supermind and a perfect dynamic self-expression here of the Spirit through the nature thus transmuted—this in Sri Aurobindo's view is the culmination of the soul's progress in the Becoming. But for a full understanding of the character of the culmination it is necessary to know the nature and significance, the fundamental principles and processes of the Becoming. Here is a succinct statement by Sri Aurobindo on the matter from "The Life Divine."

"The manifestation of the Being in our universe," says Sri Aurobindo, "takes the shape of an involution which is the starting-point of an evolution,—Matter the nether-most stage, Spirit the summit. In the descent into involution there can be distinguished seven principles of manifested being, seven gradations of the manifesting Consciousness of which we can get a perception or a concrete realisation of their presence and immanence here or a reflected experience. The first three are the original and fundamental principles and they form universal states of consciousness to which we can rise; when we do so we can become aware of supreme planes or levels of fundamental manifestation or self-formulation of the spiritual reality in which is put in front the unity of the Divine

Existence, the power of the Divine Consciousness, the bliss of the Divine Delight of existence,—not concealed or disguised as here for we can possess them in their full independent reality. A fourth principle of supramental truth-consciousness is associated with them; manifesting unity in infinite multiplicity, it is the characteristic power of self-determination of the Infinite. This quadruple power of the supreme Existence, Consciousness and Delight constitutes an upper hemisphere of manifestation based on the Spirit's eternal self-knowledge. If we enter into these principles or into any plane of being in which there is the pure presence of the Reality, we find in them a complete freedom and knowledge. The other three powers and planes of being, of which we are even at present aware, form a lower hemisphere of the manifestation, a hemisphere of Mind, Life, and Matter. These are in themselves powers of the superior principle; but wherever they manifest in a separation from their spiritual sources, they undergo as a result a phenomenal lapse into a divided in place of the true undivided existence: this lapse, this separation creates a state of limited knowledge exclusively concentrated on its own limited world-order and oblivious of all that is behind it and of the underlying unity, a state therefore of cosmic and individual Ignorance.

"In the descent into the material plane of which our natural life is a product, the lapse culminates in a total Inconscience out of which an involved Being and Consciousness have to emerge by a gradual evolution. This inevitable evolution first develops, as it is bound to develop, Matter and a material universe; in Matter, Life appears and living physical beings; in Life, Mind manifests and embodied thinking and living beings; in Mind, ever increasing its powers and activities in forms of Matter, the Supermind or Truth-Consciousness must appear, inevitably, by the very force of what is contained in the Inconscience and the necessity in Nature to bring it into manifestation. Supermind appearing manifests the Spirit's self-knowledge and whole knowledge in a supramental living being and must bring about by the same law, by an inherent necessity and inevitability, the dynamic manifestation here of the divine Existence, Consciousness and Delight of Existence. It is this that is the significance of the plan and order of the terrestrial evolution; it is this necessity that must determine all its steps and degrees, its principle and its process. Mind, Life and Matter are the realised powers of the evolution and well-known to us; supermind and the triune aspects of Sachchidananda are the secret principles which are not yet put in front and have still to be realised in the forms of the manifestation, and we know them only by hints and a partial and fragmentary action still not disengaged from the lower movement and therefore not easily recognisable. But their evolution too is part of the destiny of the soul in the Becoming,—there must be a realisation and dynamisation in earth-life and in Matter not only of Mind but of all that is above it, all that has descended indeed but is still concealed in earth-life and Matter."

This is a theory of spiritual evolution which is put forward as the explanation of the world-process. We are here concerned with the evolution of consciousness: it is from the side of consciousness that we look at the world process, unlike the modern theory of evolution, which considers the flux of outer form and structure in a changing world. Here consciousness occupies the centre of the stage assuming shape after shape, it slowly emerges from the inconscience of Matter, gradually increases in power as it rises through level after level of Life and Mind and passing beyond Mind enters into the Superconscience. The modern theory of evolution has arisen from the study of life-forms; it so arranges them before our eyes that we behold in wonder all the countless species of living things on the earth forming into a single genealogical tree; it shows how one life-form must have gradually evolved out of another previously existing one and how there has been a natural devolopment giving rise to more and more efficient and complex types culminating in the appearance of man. The most important result of this evolutionary progress is an increase of consciousness, that is a heightening of its power and a widening of its range. This, obviously, is in consonance with the spiritual theory. We may not accept in its entirety or we may not accept at all—this can be howsoever we choose—the theory of the natural development of life-forms; but it is a fact that leaps to the eye that organisms as they grow in complexity and subtlety of structure house an increasingly developed consciousness and we are here concerned with this continuous development of consciousness. We can accept, too, as undeniable facts of terrestrial evolution the prior appearance of Matter and out of it the successive emergence of Life and Mind. What we here seek is the full meaning and significance of this phenomenon of emergence.

Science, of course, is not yet ready to accord a separate status or even the status of an 'entity' to Life or Mind; officially, it carries on as if they were particular activities of specially organised forms of Matter. But the attempt to throw the whole burden of the world on Matter has broken down and, as a result, the old crude type of materialism has been given up and more flexible types which find room for potentialities of vital and mental operations in the basic stuff or for 'emergents' working in association with its evolving lines, are being suggested. Other attempts to make Life-Force or Mind responsible for the world process meet with no better success; for creative energies though they are, Matter, Life and Mind, their power of creation is a delegated power and not an inherent right. In the spiritual conception of the universe with which we are dealing, they are derivative energies, "principles distinct in their dynamic power and mode of working, even though one in original substance." The original Creative Energy is the Real-Idea or Self-realising Truth-Consciousness of the Infinite Spirit designated by Sri Aurobindo as supermind. It is the Being and Power of the Supramental status that, by a progressive involution, culminate in the inconscience of Matter. The gradual unfolding of all that is involved in the inconscience of Matter is the meaning of emergence.

The central fact of the world-process is the ascent of consciousness from degree to degree and grade to grade. There is an unmistakable continuity in the development of consciousness, for, if we look closely enough, it is not easy at all to fix the frontier between mechanical reaction and pure mechanical reflex, between pure reflex and perceptive processes or volitional activity and between the various grades themselves of perceptive processes and volitional activities. From this point of view, it is all a continuous line of ascent, with mechanical reactions and reflexes at the beginning and with human intelligence at the end. But from another point of view there are serious gaps, or even gulfs, in the ascending line. In the evolutionary chain of life-forms itself there are missing links, but perhaps they can to some extent be explained on the ground that much crucial evidence pertaining to transitional forms was destroyed and that, because of the instability of transitional forms, such evidence was liable to be destroyed and also on the ground that Nature may not always amble but may sometimes leap. But still, there seem to be some missing links that had been ever missing. If we have to account for them, or for the evolutionary process itself for that matter, there is no help for it but to invoke an inner evolutionary Force. The breaks in continuity of development in the case of consciousness appear more formidable and there are gulfs so profound that the crossing of them by normal methods of transition or by some extravagant leap does not seem feasible at all. It is not at all as if a difference of degree sufficiently accumulated appeared as a difference of kind. There is a miracle of real change, of a complete transformation of consciousness bringing with it the emergence of an unpredictable, a new state of being.

For in spite of certain startling resemblances in their reactions of fatigue and recuperation, reactions so suggestive of life, between the metal and the plant, there is quite a world of difference between them—that which we express as the difference between the living and the non-living. Again, even if the plant reacts to intoxicant and narcotic and poison with a disconcerting likeness to man himself, there is real difference, a difference that goes even deeper than in the former instance, between the plant and the lowliest animal as regards consciousness. There is a great deal, again, that is similar between the consciousness of the animal and of the human being; and yet there is a real difference, a vastly greater, a more profound difference this time. If we seek for the cause of these differences, we see that it lies in the rise of consciousness from one principle of being to another principle of being. The metal is fixed in the inconscient and inanimate principle of Matter. The plant is fixed in the subconscient principle of Life, though it is subject to Matter, and, at the same time, exhibits reactions which seem to foreshadow

Mind. The animal has a mind but mind that is a sense, a vital mind; at the same time it has a limited capacity for thought, for arriving at the solution of certain problems of limited scope through deliberation. But the sense-mind of man has become something so different from that of the animal, for it has received "the light of another principle, the intellect, which is really at once a reflection and degradation of the supermind, a ray of gnosis seized by the sense mentality and transformed by it into something other than its source." "It is this stride from one principle of being to another principle of being," Sri Aurobindo explains, "that makes, not all the difference, but still a radical characteristic difference between being and being in their nature."

Side by side with this ascent of consciousness, through degrees and grades, from one principle of being to another principle of being, there is another process of spiritual evolution which is of the highest importance—the process of integration. It is "a taking up of what has already been evolved into each higher grade as it is reached and a transformation more or less complete so as to admit of a total changed working of the whole being and nature." This process of integration is absolutely indispensable for evolution to be effective, first as consolidation of what has been already achieved and secondly as preparation of the ground for a fresh ascent. The evolutionary matrix here is Matter, a basic principle of inconscient energy with its own law of nature. Out of it forms of Matter of increasing complexity of organisation are evolved and when a fit vehicle is ready, Life makes its appearance. Life now imposes its own law of nature upon its vehicle of matter, transforms it and goes on developing its own operations and faculties in organisms of increasing power. And again, when a fit vehicle is ready Mind appears, imposes its own law on Life and Matter and goes on increasing the range and intensity of its own power. There is thus a downward and upward action, so to say, of these principles, the one for the transformation of the lower principle and the other for the reception of the next higher principle.

If we find that this is the natural rhythm of evolution, an ascending and a descending movement, ascent into a higher grade or principle and a descent of the higher into the lower for transforming it, for assuming it into itself, for intergration, then certain consequences follow in relation to the further evolution of man. Man is now a mental being and his consciousness has to emerge into the next higher principle of being—the Supermind. The being and power of Supermind will have to descend into the lower principles of his nature, into his mind, into his life and into his body, transform them and assume them into its own nature. It is for this next forward step that the evolutionary impetus in man is gathering strength. But before we go into the nature of the new emergence and the scope of the transformation that is to be effected, it is necessary to note that with the appearance of man ensues a change of capital importance in the mode of operation of the evolutionary Force. Its processes can now be geared to a new power, the power of self-aware consciousness. Man can aid Nature in his own evolution and can speed up, beyond expectation, the pace of its workings in him. Again, evolution so far has been effected through the instrumentality of changes in the physical organisation, or rather it has been accompanied by them. With man fully developed as the mental being in whom it is possible for consciousness to look upon itself, to find the secret of its own workings, we should expect evolution to use another instrumentality—that of change in the organisation of consciousness. For if the key of the evolutionary ·process is the rise of consciousness from grade to higher grade and principle to higher principle, as soon as consciousness is released into self-awareness and self-direction from absorption and involution in forms and activities of Nature—that is what happens in man and that is what distinguishes him from the rest of creation—then evolution need not any more depend, it is inevitable that it should not depend, upon change in physical organisation for its work of higher creation. Consciousness self-aware can take the work of its own evolution into its own hands. What was done in Nature by Nature is henceforward done in consciousness by consciousness.

There is anothere question, too, that we needs must consider before going into the further evolution of man—the question of the place and function of the individual in the evolution. Of course it is through individuals that the labour of evolution is carried forward, but we might say that individuals in themselves need not be of much account, they can be formed, dissolved and discarded, for the universal energy of Nature has its own devices, physical and biological, for preserving and transmitting the gains of evolution. If the soul, the highest form of individuality here, be a structure of Nature ever being built up and ever being broken down, there can be no individual evolution, for that would require a persistent individual supporting its mutations in the evolution. If we accept a cosmic Inconscient or eternal Matter or universal Life as the first and final term of the evolution, then the function of the individual would be merely to serve for a while the purposes of universal evolution. We have theories of spiritual evolution, too, in which the individual soul plays the role of an illusory phantom arising out of the eternal Superconscience and in which the purpose of the evolution is to lead this phantom individual up to the point at which it can slay itself. But if we accept the involution and evolution of Spirit as the secret of creation, if the ascent of consciousness from grade to grade through the growth of the individual being is the aim and key process of the machinery of evolution and the rising scale of material forms its outer visible aspect, then there must be a real conscient individual who can take and hold the gains of the evolution of consciousness through stage after stage of its ascent. And now if we regard as authentic the high experience in which man is said to realise his Self and its identity with the universe and the Supreme, then it is clear that the individual has an abiding place and function in the play of creation; for what the individual discovers and recovers is his true Self, not the knowledge of his own nullity and of the reality of the World-Self or only of the Supreme. The individual must, in this view, be as real a power of the Supreme as the universal Self. And the aeonic adventure of a plunge into the inconscience and an ascent into the Knowledge, because it is based on perishable forms of Matter, would require rebirth as an indispensable machinery for the evolution of the individual. It is very likely, again, that such a machinery would be used, in Nature's economy, for other purposes as well, for providing the individual with necessary respite for the proper assimilation of his terrestrial experience and also for providing him with new fields of supra-physical experience that would help to awaken the sleeping faculties of his soul. But we cannot discuss, in the limits we have set ourselves, what evidence or probability there is in reason for rebirth and the several problems connected with it. We can only refer the reader to the original.

We are now free to consider the course of man's spiritual evolution and the nature of the goal towards which it is tending. He is now the mental being, able on occasion to look from his station of witness in the mind upon the rest of his being and the processes of his nature. He has the capacity to disengage himself as a mental being; he can exercise some control over his life and body and to a certain extent succeed in transforming them. The next step in his evolution is the emergence of the spiritual principle. But we must be clear that spirituality is not merely a subtle and enlightened mind, clarified and refined emotion and instinctive grace and harmony of life and sense activity. It is consciousness raised to a new higher principle. When the emergence of the spiritual principle is definitive, man can take his stand in it and disengage himself from the rest of his being, from his mind, life and body, in a quiet wakeful stillness, in trance or behind life's normal activities. And with the growth of his spiritual consciousness he will be able to reach his inmost self, discover his spiritual Reality and enter into communion with the Divine.

What we have now to see is whether this is the final goal of man's evolution, the end of his terrestrial chapter, or whether this is only a decisive step in his forward march, the preliminary illumination of a great epiphany. If the discovery by man of his spiritual Reality and the entry into the inner Kingdom of Spirit is all that is intended by Nature, then we may say that in a sense all her work has been accomplished, there is nothing further for evolution to achieve; for man sufficiently weaned from the life of the senses can now break through the shell of his nature at some point most easy for him and discover the inner spiritual Reality. There need be no further effort for him to bring about any fundamental change in his nature or to introduce the workings of any new superior power into life's ways. Whatever may be the vistas of destiny, unimaginable by us, of the soul that has burst through nature's shell, whether it be mergence in the Absolute or aeonic or eternal station in a world of beatitude, one thing seems certain, it need have nothing more to do with Nature. Life and action may be accepted for the time being due to some ineluctable necessity—to exhaust the drive of some past tendency or in obedience to a special mission from above; but otherwise, Nature and her works stand rejected.

If such be the final goal of man, entry into the inner Kingdom of Spirit and rejection of Nature, we may say that it is a disappointing denouement to the grandiose plot that is being worked out by Nature on the earth's stage. If the evolutionary world process that we witness is for the progressive self-manifestation of Spirit, then man rising into the principle of spirituality should bring its sovereign power into life and make it, from the afflicted and chequered thing that it is, into a thing of Divine Truth and Power and Goodness. That would be the fulfilment of the terrestrial evolution and of all man's striving on the earth. We have seen that there are two processes in evolution, an ascending movement for the purpose of self-exceeding and a descending movement for the purpose of integration. Man's evolution in the spiritual principle, too, would work with this dual movement. The purpose of evolution is not accomplished in just leading man into the spiritual principle; there is a farther intention; the spirit should become sovereign in Nature, govern and lead it.

It is the first and foremost need of man that he should rise into the spiritual consciousness and establish himself in it; but if this ascent is to be used as a way out of the manifestation—that may conceivably be the way for some individuals—there is evidently no fulfilment for the manifestation, it would become something like the ladder that is kicked down. But, if we look closely at Nature, all the indications show that she is driving at fullness and perfection in the manifestation. There is a wholeness of movement in her, a rhythmic process always leading to a harmonious development, which is not content that man should grow in one part of his being and allow the others to atrophy. It is Nature's intention that we should ascend into higher and higher grades of being, but that we should ascend with all ourselves. Nature does not use mind, for example, as just a rung enabling man to reach the next higher rung. It is developed in a thousand ways, it is sharpened and refined, enlarged and sublimated, all of which looks as if it is being prepared for the reception of a higher principle. Man's secular ideal of culture is the 'complete man'. Reason growing full of dreams believes that it can achieve man's perfection,—what it would laugh at when it is too much awake. We can see through it all the demand of Nature in man for completeness and perfection. His spiritual urge, likewise, impels him, not only to the discovery of the Spirit within him, but also to the spiritualisation of his outer nature. Not only to realise the Divine but also to divinise his life, to divinise his nature and its instruments, mind, life and body is the demand upon him. That is his goal and only that would be the fulfilment of the manifestation.

But for this a radical and entire transformation of the nature is needed. Man's spiritual endeavour up till now has succeeded in releasing the spirit from the mind. The release has resulted in an inner spiritual poise and in the spiritualisation of the mind, heart and will. A subjective spirituality such as this may acquire the strength of wing that would be adequate even to the highest flight into the realms of the spirit; but it is not capable of a sovereign and pure action upon the world. This is because "the principle of spirituality has yet to affirm itself in its own complete right and sovereignty", has yet to find its own free instrumentation. Only a radical transformation of man's nature can bring into being a free instrumentation that is totally effective and that radical transformation cannot be achieved by even the highest spiritual-mental powers. The whole nature, not only the mind and the heart and the will, has to be remoulded in the truth of the Spirit and made to accept the law of its dynamis. Even the mind and the heart and the will, the higher instruments of our nature, though relatively willing to accept the spirit's influence and guidance, are to a great extent submerged in the subliminal and the subconscient. Their transformation, if it is to be complete, would require a power of deeper penetration than is yet available. And the physical and life parts of our nature reach down into the Inconscience itself and their transformation could be effected only by the original Knowledge-Will which has laid, and which alone can therefore alter, the foundations of our existence. This power that can effectuate a complete radical transformation of the nature is there in the Supermind—a term of Spirit in the higher hemisphere of existence; and the great Teacher and Yogin of the Divine Life gives us the assurance that it can be reached and brought down even into the physical basis of our existence and can be relied upon to evolve an entirely unveiled manifestation of the Spirit in earth-nature. This is the message which Sri Aurobindo has delivered to humanity; and the great exhortation has gone forth: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

It is here necessary to remove some misconceptions which seem to have arisen regarding the supramental transformation of our physical nature and the spiritualisation of our material substance itself, of which Sri Aurobindo speaks. It is clear that what is meant is no biochemic or alchemic change of the tissues and cells of the body, but something greater—a change in their fixed habitual processes by flooding the occult consciousness underlying them with the light and power of the Supermind. It is a change, to put it in a general way, in a particular form and activity of Nature which is to be brought about by a change in the consciousness underlying the form and regulating the activity. It is always in some such way that transmutations seem to take place, for instance in inanimate matter, a change in the characteristic structure of the force of being leading to a change in its outer figure and activity. Science has achieved transmutation by reaching down to the energy that constitutes matter, that is, to its force of being and inducing a change in its characteristic structures. The transformation of our physical nature would become possible if we could reach down to the consciousness underlying it and change its ways. It now obeys the law of Matter. Sri Aurobindo tells us that it can be made to reject this law and transfer its allegiance to the law of Spirit. The reign of Matter should go and give place to the reign of Spirit even in the material foundation of our existence. That, according to Sri Aurobindo, would be the culmination of the Supramental change. If we accept Spirit as the original Reality of Matter as well as of all else, there is nothing for reason to be alarmed at in such a culmination, provided the sanction for it is available in the scheme of terrestrial manifestation.

We have in the difficult and mystic language of the Veda and also in the Upanishads what seem to be unmistakable descriptions of the Supramental status; and we may safely venture to think that its power to transmute the lower nature was seen and invoked. Time has effaced the traces of whatever results that might have been achieved, and later when the energy of spiritual exploration had slackened, a world-weary philosophy imposed its line of thinking on spiritual endeavour and the highest human fulfilment came to be conceived as an absolute break-away from Nature and a cessation of our being into the pure existence of the Spirit. But, as Sri Aurobindo has said in a slightly different and wider context, "the other, the dynamic side of the spiritual urge has not been absent—the aspiration to a spiritual mastery and mutation of Nature, to a spiritual perfection of the being, a divinisation of the mind, the heart and the very body: there has even been the dream or psychic prevision of a fulfilment exceeding the individual transformation, a new earth and heaven, a city of God, a divine descent upon earth, a reign of the spiritually perfect, a kingdom of God not within us but outside, in a collective human life." Perhaps the general mental evolution of the race had not sufficiently advanced for the supramental descent to be safe and what had been achieved by individuals was engulfed in the surrounding mass of Ignorance. That would exactly happen again if the new call to a dynamic perfection and divine life found response only in a few individuals. "That is not enough if the step forward is to be for humanity; for it is only if the race advances that, for it, the victories of the spirit can be secure." But what is precisely meant by the race advancing? This is Sri Aurobindo's answer: "It is not indeed necessary or possible that the whole race should transform itself from mental into spiritual beings, but a general admission of the ideal, a widespread endeavour, a conscious concentration are needed to carry the stream of tendency to its definitive achievement". And for the new supramental principle to be fixed in terrestrial nature another instrumentation than the mental has to be fully developed. "It has besides to cease to be a purely individual achievement by a difficult endeavour. It must become the normal nature of a new type of being."

But for the supramental transformation to begin to operate at all, previous preparation of the nature is essential: it must have undergone what Sri Aurobindo calls the psychic and spiritual transformations. For man to rise from the mental into the spiritual status the unveiling of the psyche or soul in nature is the first necessity. Not the unborn Self, but its deputy here in our nature, it is missioned to turn it towards the Divine. It is the divine spark in us that, tended to a flame, will devour the Ignorance. It is "the traveller between birth and death and between death and birth, our nature parts are only its manifold and changing vesture." It takes into itself the essence of our experience in the Ignorance, keeps growing with our growth, and in turn secretly impels the nature to grow towards truth, beauty and goodness. When we can become aware of its distinct reality as our central being, when we can separate it from our inner selves of mind, life and body and when our outer nature grows sufficiently tranquil and pure to be able to receive its direct guidance, our spiritual career begins. The soul can then take in hand the work of transforming and integrating the whole being and nature by using every movement of upward striving of the mind, the love and devotion and ecstasy of the heart and the complete consecration of the will as its motive-power. And finally when the consciousness shifts its centre from the surface to the inner being, both in activity and repose, a great stride has been taken, for the whole nature can now be purified, harmonised and governed by the soul; greater ranges of being within and beyond come to light; a direct experience of the Self, the Divine and an opening into the cosmic consciousness become possible.

But in this psychic change the self-expression in life of the emerged psychic individual, however refined and enlarged, is hampered by the limits of our present nature; and also, the experience of the Self, Universal and Transcendent has yet to become a permanent possession. The limits can be broken down and the experience made permanent by what Sri Aurobindo calls the spiritual transformation. The individual soul or psyche, besides, moving inward into the Divine Self, has to open up a passage into the ranges of consciousness that lie above the conceptual mind—into the ranges of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuitive Mind and then into the Overmind and beyond. "The strong, hard and bright lid of mind—mind constricting, dividing and separative" has to be pierced through and an aperture effected for consciousness to ascend into the higher ranges and for the Light and Power and Felicity from them to descend into our being. And when they come, they begin to enlarge and greaten our being, to remould and transform our nature and all its parts which have already been made plastic and pure by the psychic change. But even before the psychic change is well on its way it is possible to achieve the opening into the higher ranges. For there is no law regulating invariably the sequence of these spiritual processes and the lines of spiritual evolution are various and always the highest law is that the Spirit bloweth *how* it listeth. The ascent into the higher ranges and the descent of their substance and force into the lower levels bring various kinds of spiritual experience and manifold truth and wisdom of the spirit. In time the consciousness gets fixed in a higher plane and from there governs and transforms the lower nature. "Immortality becomes no longer a belief or experience but a normal self-awareness". The presence and rule of the Divine in ourselves and the world becomes a concrete and constant experience. The consciousness of the mental being has been changed into the consciousness of the spiritual being.

These higher degrees of mind are visited by the rays and suffused with the influences of the creative Truth Light or Supermind and so they are gnostic in their principle and power. The crossing over into the Higher Mind is thus a decisive step from the Ignorance into the Knowledge. The Higher Mind is "a luminous thought-mind, a mind of Spirit-born conceptual knowledge". Its thought is "a self-revelation of eternal Wisdom, not an acquired knowledge". It works on the rest of the being "through the power of thought, through the idea-force". It is not completely effective, for the reason that its idea-force suffers a diminution in quality and power when it enters the mind and life and body consciousness. The Illumined Mind, which works primarily by vision, vision that has a greater and more direct perceptual power than thought, vision that is a spiritual sense, can bring in a more effective power for changing the nature. The processes of its cognition are more vivid and luminous, the operations of its will are more swift and intense, than those of the Higher Thought-Mind, they are even accompanied by an inwardly visible light; and its power penetrates down to the physical sense which can now become alive to the touch of the Divine in all things.

The faculties and powers of the Higher Mind and the Illumined Mind derive from the Intuitive Mind and this carries a step farther the work of spiritual transformation. It can intuitivise the whole consciousness, the will, the emotions, the vital impulses, the physical sensations. In intuition is clearly revealed for the first time the true nature of all higher knowledge. Mental knowledge appears as something laboriously acquired, something that is forced on us by an outside world; but the higher knowledge is something to which the consciousness simply awakens, something revealed to it or remembered by it or something inherent in it. In the mind, consciousness has to work through a physical instrumentation evolved for the purpose of getting into touch with a physical world; above the mind, consciousness is directly aware, not dependent on, though it may use, sense instrumentation; and knowledge there is the result of a direct, unmediated functioning of consciousness. Intuition would thus appear not as something mysterious— it has that character when it visits the consciousness imprisoned in the mind—but as a perfectly natural movement of consciousness where it is free to act and know in its own right. It may arise from a direct action by consciousness, either of making contact with or penetrating into its object; or it may emerge, indirectly and in various forms from a concealed and far off identity-knowledge. Intuition is characteristically a spiritual sense of touch. It has other forms akin to sight and hearing. It has a way, native to itself, of automatically discriminating and of discovering the right relations between ideas or between things. It occurs under different guises in the different levels of our being. The action, for example, of a vital intuitive intelligence is unmistakable not only in man but also, and more prominently, in animals. The intuitive way of functioning, though of different grades, seems to be the more general mode in which consciousness works and the ratiocinative mind a special departure from it. The Intuitive Mind can therefore take up into itself the intuitive functionings of all the parts of our nature and recast them into its own higher mode; it can thus achieve a more thorough integration of our being than was yet possible.

Between the Intuitive Mind and the Supermind there intervenes a highest level of mind, it, too, an original creative Force. Though in possession of the true integral knowledge, it bases its action on a separative principle. In Supermind the integrality is never lost, neither in movement of knowledge nor in movement of action. But Overmind splits up the aspects and statuses of the one Being into separate worlds and planes and conditions of being, breaks up the formulations of the Consciousness-Force of the one Being into separate, independent and even conflicting cosmic principles, forces and movements. Overmind is a power of cosmic consciousness. Ascent into it and descent of its "all-enlarging, all-sublimating energy" cannot be made wholly possible without a firm basis of cosmic experience in the individual being. When Overmind descends, the ego-sense thins and vanishes and what remains is the pervasive consciousness of a boundless universal self; the mind, life and body are felt as parts of universal Nature. Universality is the character of overmental existence. Individuality may entirely disappear, or an individual who identifies himself with the whole world or has a concrete sense of the whole world within himself may emerge, gradually to become the Supramental Individual who is ever one with the universal and transcendent. "The overmind change is the final consummating movement of the dynamic spiritual transformation ; it is the highest possible status-dynamis of the spirit in the spiritual mind plane".

But the transformative power of even the overmental energy is not absolute; the Creator Power is Supermind and it is only the Supramental Power that can operate, its full native potency unimpaired, in the medium of any inferior principle. It is only that that can perfect our material existence by flooding its foundation of Inconscience with its own Light. But the passage through Overmind into Supermind is the passage into the Higher Hemisphere of existence, into Super-nature. Man could make the ascent by his own unaided power if some seed-state of Overmind and Supermind had been there ready-formed in his subliminal being. The presence in one case and lack in the other of a subliminal seed-formation of intellectual mind, for example, would account for the fact that the human infant grows in time into the fulness of his mental capacities, while his nearest animal cousin, even when subjected to a precisely similar environment and training, ceases to grow in power of learning after a short period. But Sri Aurobindo tells us that there is no seed-state formation of Overmind or Supermind on the accessible levels of our subliminal being. It is only a direct and unveiled intervention of the Supramental Power from its own high plane that can deliver and release into emergence the Supermind occult in the heart of Nature. A direct intervention from above the field of evolution must have been necessary, according to Sri Aurobindo, even for the emergence of Life and Mind. At least one of the prominent sponsors of the modern evolutionary theory in the last century felt the need of such an intervention, of an influx from above. But however that may be, a direct intervention in the form of a descent into us of the being and power of the Superconscience is a necessary condition for the emergence in us of the involved powers of Overmind and Supermind. It is conceivable that the Superconscience may, in the slow millennial processes of Nature, succeed in ultimately creating a subliminal formation of these powers in the human being. But may it not be that the burden of bringing about this consummation is thrown wholly on man's shoulders?

It is not for us to give here a description of the steps of the supramental transformation or of the evolved supramental being. One should prefer to grapple with these high conditions of being at the source, in the Master himself. What can be given here are a few general indications. Supermind is "the nature of the Divine Being, not indeed in its absolute self-existence, but in its action as the Lord and Creator of its own worlds." "It is the pure divine ideation and formation in the

Infinite—only an ideation and formation that is organised not as an unreal play of mental thought, but as a real play of conscious being." This Real Ideation brings the Many out of the One; but by a double action of its consciousness, one a comprehending and the other an apprehending action, Supermind enjoys the experience of an inalienable unity in difference and of a free difference in unity. The balance of this relation between the One and the Many could be a little further varied by a greater stress on the apprehending action of the supramental consciousness, when the realisation of utter unity would still be the accompaniment and culmination of all experience, but experience itself would be predominantly taken up with the play of a multiple and various manifestation. The pure self-awareness of Spirit becoming a dynamic All-awareness—this then is Supermind Consciousness. It is the power of free self-determination of the Eternal and Infinite Spirit.

If this is the nature of the Supermind on its own plane, we can see that the processes of our cognition and will must change radically under the impact of its descending influence Mind proceeds from the known to the unknown, and on the basis of a separation from itself of the object that is to be known. The supramental knowledge, on the other hand, can only be a bringing out, or making explicit, of the known, of that which is within itself, because to it all knowledge is self-knowledge, all things being the realisation in Time and Space of its own Real-Idea or Truth-consciousness. The supramental knowledge will therefore be knowledge based on identity, which is the supreme mode of knowledge and is the parent of intuitive and all other forms of spiritual knowledge. When Supermind takes up the mind and the senses into itself and begins to transform them, we may expect that their basis of activity would be more and more shifted from one of separation to that of identity. Even the senses would become channels for the experience of identity, for all relations in Supermind are relations based on identity. Again, Supermind is self-realising Truth, truth of force of Being which translates itself into truth of Becoming. Consciousness here is not merely or primarily a power for perception and ideation, but is also a power for infallible effectuation. Man rising into the supermind would perceive the truths of his being and the truths of his nature, the truths of their present formulation, tendency and culmination; and he would bring down the self-effective real-idea for the fulfilment of these truths. The discords and disparities between his idea and will would be healed;

desire would not be there to interfere with the idea or influence the will, and idea and will would become unified in their source, which is Truth. The heart which now discerns the savour of all our experience and is glad or is pained or is indifferent learns, even under the psychic and spiritual transformations, to find a nourishing sweetness even in the bitterest experience; for it moves not through an alien or evil world but through a world which is a manifestation of the Divine, and it sees that all experiences that come to it are influences thrown on it by the Divine for its growth. It awakens to the pure delight that is fundamental to being. This delight would rise to its highest diapason in the supermind change. Purity and Peace are the characteristics of all spiritual delight and these ever dwell in the heart of even its highest intensities and most forceful vibrations. Life would not be allowed to restrict the power of the spirit by imposing upon it its own inferior law; neither is it rejected and suffered to drag on anyhow; it is made to exceed itself and to fulfil itself by this self-exceeding. Its seeking for growth and abundance, love and enjoyment in the world would be turned into a seeking for growth and abundance in the Divine, for love and enjoyment in the Divine. The subconscient basis of its operations in the body would be thoroughly illumined and they would begin to obey a higher law, the will of the spirit. And even the body will have to do the same; the subconscient and the inconscient from which arises the law of the body would become amenable to the Light and the Power of the Supermind. The basis of inconscience will have been transformed into "a lower or supporting superconscience by the supramental emergence." The whole being would be flooded with "a supreme energy of Consciousness-Force which would meet, assimilate or harmonise with itself all the forces of existence that surround and press upon the body." It would become in every way a fit instrument for the Supramental Gnostic Being.

The Gnostic Individual would be the crown and fulfilment of evolutionary Nature. In him consciousness reaches its utmost height and dwells in the creative Knowledge and Will of the Divine. His individuality is not separative, for the mystery of his identity with the Self of all beings, with the Self of the universe and with the Transcendent beyond the universal Self and beyond all Self-ness, is to him not a mystery, but a constant divine awareness. In him Nature is transformed into Super-Nature; mind, life and body would not only not hamper the fulness of his spiritual existence, of his spiritual perfection, but would be apt and transmuted instruments for his free self-expression, for his life and action, for his divine work of uplifting and changing the world of Ignorance. For him there could be neither bondage nor frustration; for acting from above the Ignorance of the lower Nature, he has the inalienable freedom of the Spirit and acting in consonance with the Divine Will he is never frustrated. Having broken down all internal barriers that separate one part of his being from another, having broken down all external barriers that separate his individual formations of the energies of Nature, his mind, life and body, from their universal forms, having found the truth of the relation between his Self and the World-Self, between his Nature and the World-Nature, he can become an instrument, an agent of the World-Self, a participant with the World-Self, in its universal action through World-Nature. The World-Energy would act through him and he would act through the World-Energy, and both these ways of action would be the same movement, indistinguishable from each other, of bringing about the accomplishment of the Divine Will.

This is the Divine Life, the goal of man's spiritual evolution and his highest destiny. The native dynamism of Spirit is Supermind and without rising into it man cannot fully divinise his life. Mind cannot perfect life, it has neither the necessary knowledge, nor the requisite power. Life and action may be rejected, we may enter inward into the soul and establish ourselves in some state of spiritual absorption; Knowledge and Joy and Peace can be ours and we may, if we are so minded, act upon the collective human life of Ignorance as far as it may be possible to do; but the action would be incommensurate with the inner spiritual status and its results unsatisfactory. That is why spiritual endeavour has not yet achieved its highest results. It will achieve them when the Supramental Being takes the lead of the terrestrial evolution.

But for this leading to be there securely, it is not enough if one here and one there achieves the supramental status. The gnostic life has to go beyond individual achievement and has to establish itself in groups, then in greater collectivities, then in a race of new beings. The realisation of this great ideal and highest possibility seems to be the only real and practical solution of man's difficulties. The peril of a barbarian incursion, not from beyond the frontiers—that too has not disappeared, unfortunately—but from within man's own breast is always there. Today it seems to be almost successful. Man has not been able to hit on the right relations between the individual, the group, the community, the state and all the multitude of states. That is why the more he advances, the more his history seems to be the story of crisis after crisis. His progress certainly is not a mere myth, but the fact remains that it has not been of the kind that would assure his survival or, if it is felt that it can still be hoped for, it has not been of the kind that would save him from a reversion to barbarism: not the primal variety, but a new one, terrible—as only the resources of modern Science can make it terrible. Man dreams of a world-family of perfected individuals, but he has turned to social machinery to make his dream come true. Social machinery is indispensable and can do many things, but it cannot new-make human nature. Only the power of the Spirit can do it. But a surface change can be of no avail. The lower forces in human nature are too strong to allow it to take hold and become a stable and permanent influence in man's evolution. A radical transformation of human nature is essential and that only the Supermind can achieve. The supramental being must establish himself as the leader of the terrestrial evolution. Through the recurrent serious crises which humanity is at present undergoing and which are, at bottom, of a moral and spiritual character, Nature is presenting to humanity a choice of its destiny. It is for humanity to choose.

Now it is unnecessary to stress that the great aim of a supramental transformation of human nature is in many ways a new and original envisagement of life's possibility. It is a new aspiration. It is the crowning spire of a great shrine of spiritual knowledge that Sri Aurobindo has brought into being, through his vision, for a new humanity. The Gita, adumbrating as it does the philosophy of the Divine Man, has made some advances in the direction of an integral aim such as is implied in the Vedic aspiration of Swarajya and Samrajya, or Self-dominion and All-dominion, which the succeeding ages unfortunately allowed to lapse. But even the Gita, influenced probably by the pessimistic trend of Buddhistic thought, often formulates to the seeker his aim as escape from birth and death. As an element in the divine fulfilment and as meaning complete mastery over Nature and its gravitational force towards earth-existence, this aim may be unexceptionable; but stressed in its negative aspect and envisaged as the whole content of man's fulfilment and destiny, it has its dangers. The adequate statement of the full aim of man's evolution is not of a little practical importance and is not merely a question of high theory, as might be supposed; a narrow aim goes down cramping the course of human life and endeavour along its entire length, often resulting in disastrous constrictions. We are grateful, therefore, to Sri Aurobindo for having placed before man the goal of his destiny in its largest scope, however vast and tremendous and even unrealisable it may appear to our mind of ignorance.

We have tried to give an idea of the thought and vision of Sri Aurobindo as regards the fundamental problems of existence, that is, of the central theme of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. It is not here possible to go into its application to the many problems of life and thought which man has been striving to solve throughout the ages. The future will record as one of the main achievements of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy that it has stemmed finally the currents of world-negation and world-refusal that one of the greatest personalities of all time, Buddha, had let loose in the stream of Indian philosophic thought. Some chapters in these volumes are devoted to a complete and thoroughgoing refutation—the last word on the matter—of the elusive doctrine of illusionism, which has been not unjustly characterised as Buddhism in disguise and which has been driven deep into the heart of India by Sankara—an intense flaming spirit solely intent, in the midst of the Buddhistic debacle, upon making India hark back to the Upanishadic message of the immortal Self. The problem of world-evil—it is this which throws up the philosophies of world-negation—Sri Aurobindo faces squarely. As long as the world is not divinely justified, the divine is imperfectly known. But the various efforts of the intellect to solve this insistent problem may arrive at a more or less precarious justification; the heart in its moments of grace may echo the mystic's cry of rapture that this world with all its evil is a world of glory and delight; but the knowledge that would annul the problem for us, it would seem, could be securely possessed only far beyond the boundaries of the mind. Even those that have crossed them seem unable to transmit the knowledge through the word. Or is it that they have spoken but we are unable to understand? Perhaps it is as well that it should be so and this too may be a part of the scheme of things. For what else, if not the lure of this knowledge, could give us such driving power to transcend ourselves? For transcending, we could transform evil, along with its ground, the dark earth nature, in us and around us. That is the aim of the integral perfection which Sri Aurobindo holds before us. No other philosophy or religion, positivist or spiritual, gives to life on the earth such high significance as Sri

Aurobindo gives. He affirms that our outer nature too has a claim to deliverance and that it can be divinely transformed. Human life is not merely a preparation for the soul's perfection elsewhere. Human life itself can and should become the manifestation of that perfection. Sri Aurobindo has presented in these volumes an organic body of thought and knowledge concerning man and the universe which has the character of a perfectly natural and inevitable synthesis of all that is valuable in the various main lines of intellectual seeking and vision, of aspiration and discipline, of upward effort and aim, of the Ancient and the Modern world, of the West and the East. This is not a synthesis of the kind we know in Spencer, for instance; this seems to grow out of vision, which is by nature synthetic and total. Resurgent India has in "The Life Divine" a world view worthy of its glorious past and formative of a more glorious future.

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